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## **Women in the Second Egyptian Parliament Post the Arab Spring: Do they think they stand a chance?<sup>1</sup>**

**By Laila El Baradei<sup>2</sup> and Dina Wafa<sup>3</sup>**

### **Abstract**

Egyptian women were very active on the streets during the 25 January Revolution, both in the demonstrations and in the subsequent elections, showing very high rates of participation as voters, yet surprisingly, very low rates of representation in the 2012 parliament. The current study seeks to explore different views, expectations and perceptions of Egyptian women regarding women's role in the forthcoming 2013 parliamentary elections, and to identify what alternative measures are needed to strengthen women's representation in parliament, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The methodology utilized relied on a literature review in addition to a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results of a on-line and an off-line survey instrument implemented on a purposive proportional sample of 244 women of different political affiliations, educational levels, economic classes, age groups, and covering those working outside the home, and those who are not. Among the main findings of the study were that women do not automatically vote for other women, that the perception of women MPs performance by other women is mostly negative, whether before or after the Revolution and that women think women MPs are better capable of representing their needs. The names of other women MPs remembered had nothing to do with their political or parliamentary performance. The main perceived barriers to winning seats in parliament were the dominant societal culture, the lack of women qualifications, and the dominance of the Islamists rule. In general, the study concluded that Egyptian women lack confidence in their own abilities as parliamentarians and do not think they stand a good chance in the next 2013 elections.

*Key words:* Women, Parliament, Egypt, Elections

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<sup>1</sup> Right after the first submission of this article, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2013, Egypt witnessed a second wave for its Revolution. An estimated 33 million people took to the streets and their demonstrations were described by some news media, including CNN, as the largest ever witnessed in world history. As a result President Morsi was ousted and the Muslim Brothers' rule, mainly responsible for the deterioration in the position of women in society over the past two years, was ended. The authors thought this should be mentioned as it is very much related to the topic of the article. They remain hopeful that things will change for the better for women, whether as regards quantitative and qualitative representation in parliament, or in other spheres of life.

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## Introduction

Egyptians surprised the world and themselves by ousting a dictatorship regime that was thought to be immune to any resistance. Millions went to the streets demanding their rights to freedom, equity and bread. Egyptians were united in their demands with no social, economic, religious or gender differences. All were in hope for a better future. On February 11, 2011 as Mubarak stepped down many were enthusiastic that the quick path to democracy and development has commenced.

Today, two years later we need to evaluate the course of development in Egypt and of the demands of the uprising. Egyptians who were once united on their desire to topple Mubarak's regime now stand divided on several issues including government, human rights, security, and the list goes on. Our study will focus on the status of women as perceived by fellow women. Women were very active on the streets during the revolution, both in the demonstrations and in the subsequent elections, showing very high rates of participation as voters, yet surprisingly, very low rates of representation in the 2011 parliament.

Having women represented in parliament, where laws and policies are formulated, is of vital importance to make sure their voices get heard and their needs met (IDEA, 2005, qtd in Al Maaitah et al, 2011). However, several cultural, structural, and election specific factors hinder their representation in parliament (Carter Center, 2012). The end result was that only eight women won seats on the 2012 parliament, and two were appointed, thus bringing women representation to only 2% of the 508 seat parliament (Carter Center, 2012; IFES, 2011), compared to a 12% representation in parliament before the Revolution under the toppled regime (Fadel & Hassieb, 2012), compared to the Arab states average of 11%, and compared to a rising global average of women participation in parliament of 19% in 2011 (IDEA, 2011). However, this parliament did not last very long and was soon dissolved when the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that the elections at large were unconstitutional in June 2012, six months after its start of operation.

Egypt is now approaching a second round of parliamentary elections post the revolution, expected in October 2013. A new elections law, contested by many, has been issued and will be enforced during the coming round. Nevertheless, there are still serious worries about women's rights and representation in parliament. Is it a matter of cultural, structural and legal factors that hinder women's representation in parliament, or is it also a matter of women's confidence in their abilities, and their willingness to fight for their rights? The current study seeks to explore different views, expectations and perceptions of Egyptian women regarding women's role in the forthcoming parliamentary elections, and to identify what alternative measures are needed to strengthen women's representation in parliament, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The main concern is figuring out if they themselves perceive they stand a real chance?

The methodology utilized relies on a literature review in addition to a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results of a on-line and an off-line survey instrument implemented on a purposive proportional sample of 244 women of different political affiliations, different educational levels, and different age groups, and covering those working outside the home, and those who are not. Responses to the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics for the closed ended questions and using content analysis for the open-ended questions. The time frame for the empirical study was from mid Feb. 2013 to mid April 2013, a few months preceding the start of the second round of parliamentary elections post the 25 Jan. 2011 Revolution in Egypt. Table 1– annex - shows to what extent the purposive study sample is proportional to the Egyptian population demographics.

## **Research Problem and Context**

Despite the massive participation of women in the 25 January Revolution, in the demonstrations, in the subsequent parliamentary elections and in the constitutional referenda that followed, yet there is a general perception that women are losing many of their earlier won rights, those gained before the revolution, and there is a general set-back in their footing in society. Evidence to that effect include, in no specific ranking order: the increasing incidence and violence of sexual harassment cases reported against women on the streets, the diminishing role of the National Council of Women that was earlier headed by the first lady of Egypt whose husband – president Mubarak - was toppled through the Revolution, the abolishment of the quota system in parliament, the heightened voices of the extremist Islamists groups with views totally against active women participation in society and in the public sphere, and the poor performance of some of the women Islamists political party members in the first post revolution parliament with outrageous views against liberal women's rights . The following paragraphs describe the context for the planned second round of parliamentary elections and the challenges encountering women and their potential representation in parliament.

The situation with sexual harassment of women on the streets of Egypt has reportedly worsened ever since the Revolution (Kaoud, 2013). According to the Human Rights Watch World Report (2013): “systematic sexual harassment of women and girls in public spaces [in Egypt] continued without serious attempts by the government to intervene and halt, or deter the practice”.

As for the discussion of women's issues in the first elected parliament post the revolution, Islamists members astounded the general public by their calls for lowering the age of marriage for girls from the current stipulated 16 years of age, by calling for allowing female genital mutilation on the pretext that it is an Islamic habit, and by advocating for the abolishment of the right of women to initiate a no fault divorce, known as ‘khulu’ in Arabic, which had been granted to women ten years ago (Human Rights Watch, 2003). Some of these calls were voiced by women members of the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), the party of the Muslim Brotherhood. One of the notorious women FJP members of parliament, known as Oum Ayman, was reported to have called for the abolishment and modification of seven different laws, all related to women rights. Among her proposals were the abolishment of the ‘khulu’ law, not allowing women to travel alone without a legitimate male chaperone, not allowing women married to foreigners to pass on their Egyptian citizenship to their kids, and not requiring a man to inform his first wife when he decides to take on a second wife, because this she perceived threatens the welfare of the family unit (Al-Shafie, 2012). Part of the rationale behind the increased attack on women's rights, including: the Khulu law and the quota system, was their association with the name of Suzanne Mubarak, the former president's wife, and the desire to get rid of everything associated with her name (Owen, 2012, p.183).

## **Background for Parliamentary Elections in Egypt**

The first parliamentary elections to occur after the 2011 revolution in Egypt followed a complicated relatively unique system of elections combining between both a closed party list system and an individual candidacy system, and it took a while for citizens to comprehend how the system actually worked. A total of 498 members were to be elected and half of them had to

be farmers or workers; a professional quota system maintained since 1952. Additionally, 60% of the seats had to be allocated through a party list system, and 30% through an individual system. The women's quota system in place during the earlier parliamentary elections before the revolution was abolished (IFES, 2011). The only semblance to a quota system was the requirement by the new elections law number 108 for 2011 that political parties include one woman at least on their party lists. There was no specification where on the list should the woman's name be included (Al Sawy, 2011, p.19).

With a 2% representation in the 2012 first post revolution parliament, women had fared very poorly in the elections. Eleven women only managed to make it into parliament; nine of who managed to get in through the party list system and were elected, while two were appointed by the Supreme Council for Military Forces (SCAF) which was responsible for managing the nation's affairs at that point in time. Four of the winners were from the Islamist 'Freedom and Justice Party (FJP)'; three from the liberal 'El Wafd' party, one from the Salafist party 'Al-Islah wa Al-Tanmia', one from the semi- socialist party 'Al Masry Al-Democrati Al-Igtimai' and the two who were appointed had no specific political party affiliations (El Sawy, 2012). See Table No. 2 – Annex - for details about the eleven women who won the elections.

Many of well-known women activists in Egypt were greatly upset by the poor performance of women in the 2011 elections. The secretary general of the National Council of Women in 2011, Dr. Farkhonda Hassan pointed out that the underrepresentation of women in parliament could set Egypt at large: "a dozen steps back" (Washington Post Social Reader, 9 Dec. 2011). Rabab El Mahdi, an American University Political Science professor and a political activist commenting on women's status after the revolution said that: "The Liberals and the Islamists disagree on many issues, but both agree on marginalizing women" (AUC, 2013). An additional interesting and at the same time alarming feature pertaining to women's participation in the 2011 elections, was how some women's photos were replaced in many elections publicity campaigns by either their husband's photos, a bouquet of flowers or simply the party logo. This practice was followed mainly by the Islamists extremists parties, like Al Nour, but also by liberal parties like Al-Wafd party in some governorates in southern Egypt, including Al-Minya governorate (Pasha, 2011).

Many reasons were given to explain women's low representation, including: the changes that occurred in the parliamentary election laws and the abolishment of the women's quota (Sika et al, 2012). Although women represented 47.3% of the total 50 million registered voters in the 2011 elections (El Sawy, 2012, p.12), yet the percentage of women candidates, whether running as individuals or through support from their political parties, did not exceed an average of 12% of the total number of candidates, and this percentage varied from one election phase to the next, reaching 10% in the third phase. See table 2 for Egyptian Women Candidates in 2012 Parliamentary Elections.

**Table 2: Egyptian Women Candidates in 2012 Parliamentary Elections**

Phase	Total candidates	Women	Percentage women candidates	Percentage women on individual seats	Percentage women on lists
<b>Phase 1</b>	1547	376	24.3%	15.5%	43%
<b>Phase 2</b>	3813	328	8.6%	4.7%	14%

<b>Phase 3</b>	2753	280	10%	5.1%	16.6%
<b>Total</b>	8113	984	12.1%	7.2%	11.2%

Source: AboulKomsan (2012).

Although, the total number of women running as candidates in the 2012 elections and equaling 984 in total, had increased from the previous 2010 elections numbers under the quota system, wherein the total number of women candidates had reached only 404 (El Sawy, 2012), yet with the abolishment of the quota, the final the number who made it into parliament was much less. While in the 2010 parliament under the quota system there were 64 women members of parliament, in 2012, there were only 11, and both the 2010 and the 2012 parliaments did not last long. The 2010 parliament was dissolved after the 25 January Revolution and the 2012 parliament was dissolved by virtue of a constitutional court decision.

The 2011 elections law sufficed with imposing that each closed party list must include at least one female candidate. Since only those placed in the first three slots stood a chance, this resulted in that over 70% of women were placed toward the bottom end of the list, and thus had negligible chances of winning. Both the Islamist and the secular liberal parties acted similarly in placing women towards the lower end of their party lists. Additionally, there was no political will to empower women. Table 3 below shows the representation of women in Egyptian parliaments from the year 2000 to 2012.

**Table 3: Egyptian Women Representation in Parliament from 2000-2012**

	<b>2000</b>		<b>2005</b>		<b>2010</b>		<b>2012</b>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Number of Women Members</b>	11	2.4	9	2	64	12.7	11	2.2
<b>Elected</b>	7	1.5	5	0.9	63	12.5	9	1.8
<b>Appointed</b>	4	0.9	4	1.1	1	0.2	2	0.4

Source: El Sawy (2012), p. 31.

As for how women fared in parliament, we find that only a few women participated in the discussions on changes in elections laws and even the new post revolution parties ignored women's rights in their programs and sufficed with a general social program (Aboulkomsan, 2012). In a detailed analysis of women's performance in the 2012 parliament, it was stated that women's participation in the discussions did not exceed 3% of the total allotted time, that they did not focus on the impact of legislation on women, except in one instance when discussing the extension of the medical insurance to cover women headed households. There was no coordination in the performance of the different women MPs. No women MPs adopted or presented any legislation focusing on women and in general their legislative performance was characterized as weak and they were perceived as needing specialized capacity building programs (El Sawy, 2012, p. 68).

### **Ongoing Debate Reference Legal Framework Governing Parliamentary Elections:**

With the first parliament elected after the 25 January Revolution ordained as unconstitutional, because it did not provide equal opportunity to candidates running through the party list and those running as individuals, the debate over the new elections law started again, and has been ongoing for a while. The second house of parliament – known in Egypt as the Shura Council – and which continued in operation after the dissolving of the first house of parliament – the People's Assembly – proposed and approved two new laws in terms of principle in March 2013; one was the Elections law and the other a law for Practicing Political Rights. Both laws have still to be presented and approved by the Supreme Constitutional Court. Nevertheless, some constitutional law experts expressed their concern about the authorization of the second house of parliament to issue laws and were skeptical about both the legality of the situation and the qualifications of the current Shura Council members (Othman et al, 2012). Similarly, the National Council for Women expressed its dissatisfaction with the new elections law proposed. The new law stipulates that party lists should include at least one-woman candidate, but without specifying her position on the list. This means that they will not be given priority and will most probably be listed towards the end of the list, with little or negligible chances of winning seats especially with the large size of the elections districts. The current situation is considered a major set-back, particularly if we consider that the first woman leader in history was an Egyptian: Meryet-Nit in the thirty-first century B.C (Watson, Jencik & Selzer, 2005). According to the National Council of Women, since women represent 48% of the Egyptian population, and more than 41% of registered voters- exact figures differ in different sources-, they should be proportionally represented in parliament, or else this would not be constitutionally fair (Al-Ahram Gate, 2013).

### **Lessons Learnt from Other Countries Experiences to Enhance Women's Participation:**

Why is it that women's representation in parliament is highly regarded and aspired to by all nations? Several arguments have been made over the years to justify the need for more women representation in parliament, including a justice, experience, interest and development argument. It is said that since women make up half the population, then it is only fair that they should be proportionately represented in parliaments, their experience should be capitalized on, their interests which sometimes conflict with men's interests should be represented by members of the same gender, and that finally their representation will eventually have a positive impact on the development status of any country (Dahlerup, 2007, p. 19).

Despite the fact that there is little evidence to prove a direct correlation between an increase in women's representation in parliament and the increased advocacy for gender issues (Waylen, 2007, p.137), yet many countries still aspire towards increasing participation of women in their parliaments and on improving their international ranking in that regard.

There are international rankings for nations based on the percentage of women participation in parliament. According to the 2013 Women in National parliaments Report, Egypt ranked 136<sup>th</sup> over 190 countries with 2% women representation in parliament out of 508 seats (Inter Parliamentary Union, 2013). Table 4 below shows the percentage of women representation in parliament in various world regions. The 2% women representation in Egypt is way below even the average for the Arab States, which shows as 15.7% and is the lowest when compared to other world regions. A lot of work needs to be done to improve the situation quantitatively and qualitatively.

**Table 4: Percentage of Women Representation in Parliament in Various World Regions**

Region	Single House or Lower House
Nordic Countries	42%
Americas	23.9%
Europe- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) member countries including Nordic Countries	23.7%
Europe – OSCE member countries excluding Nordic Countries	21.9%
Sub-Saharan Africa	20.9%
Asia	18.4%
Arab States	15.7%

Source: Women in National Parliaments- Situation as of 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013

<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world010213.htm>

What have countries done to enhance women's representation in parliament? The quota system is one thing and it is a highly debated policy. If we examine the percentage for women representation in National parliaments in Arab states, as shown in table 5 below, we will see that Egypt is amongst the lowest ranking countries.

**Table 5: Women Representation in National Parliaments in Selected Arab States**

Rank	Country	Lower or Single House of Parliament			
		Elections	Seats	Women	% W
28	Algeria	5 -2012	462	146	31.6%
38	Tunisia	10-2011	217	58	26.7%
43	Iraq	3-2010	325	82	25.2%
46	Sudan	4-2010	354	87	24.6%
68	Saudi Arabia	1-2013	151	30	19.9%
78	U.A.E.	9-2011	40	7	17.5%
81	Morocco	11-2011	395	67	17.0
84	Libya	7-2012	200	33	16.5%
95	Somalia	8-2012	200	33	16.5%
113	Bahrain	10-2010	30	3	10.0%
136	Egypt	11-2011	508	10	2.0%
137	Oman	10-2011	84	1	1.2%

Source: Women in National Parliaments, situation as of 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013. Accessed on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2013. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

Most of the better performing Arab states in terms of women representation in parliament have implemented some form of quota system.

- In *Morocco* King Muhammad VI in 2004 introduced a quota system for women in parliament, that was first opposed by members of senior Islamic clergy, and then had to be enforced through using the special authority of the king (Owen, 2012, p. 133). According to the Morocco quota system, 60 seats are reserved for women out of the 305 seats of parliament (Morocco Quota Project).



- In *Saudi Arabia*, in February 2013 for the first time, a quota was applied enabling the appointment of 30 women in parliament in the 150 member Saudi Council. This enabled Saudi Arabia to move upwards along the world ranking of women's percentage in parliament, from number 184 to 80. Interestingly, 27 out of the 30 women appointed are Ph.D. holders and two are princesses from the royal family (Touni, 2013).
- In *Tunisia*, post the Revolution of 2011, the new elections law- decree 35, article 16- stipulated that in the party lists, there should be alternation between men and women, thus allowing women an equal opportunity for representation in parliament, and representing a form of implementing a 50% quota for women (Quota Project; IDEA, 2011).
- In *Libya*, although women had no political participation history under former President Qaddafi, things changed after the revolution and during the July 2012 elections, women made up 45% of the voters turnout (Gender Concerns International). Law 4, on the election of the national general congress, May 2012, article 15, stated mandatory alternation of female and male candidates on all partly lists (Quota Project; Daragahi, 2012). As a result thirty three women were elected representing 16.5% of the 200 member national general congress (Gender Concerns International).

Studies about women's representation in countries post transition came up with very interesting findings. Although there was a general upward trend in the percentage of women represented in parliament (See table 6), yet there were other notable variations in performance. No correlation was proven between women's representation and the level of neither freedom ranking, nor GDP per capita. For instance, in 2005, Chile and South Africa had similar freedom ratings, but different levels of women's representation. Similarly, South Africa with the lowest GDP per capita had the highest women representation, while Hungary with a high GDP per capita, had a low women representation (Waylen, 2007, pp.109-111).

**Table 6: Comparative Women Representation in Parliament in Countries in Transition:**

Country	1990	1995	2000	2005
<b>Argentina</b>	6.7	25.2	26.5	36.2
<b>Brazil</b>	5.3	6.6	5.7	8.6
<b>Chile</b>	5.8	7.5	10.8	15
<b>Czech Republic</b>	10	10	15	17
<b>El Salvador</b>	-	10.7	9.5	10.7
<b>Hungary</b>	7.3	11.4	8.3	9.1

<b>Peru</b>	6	10.8	20	18.3
<b>Poland</b>	13	13	13	20.4
<b>Russian Federation</b>	-	10.2	7.7	9.8
<b>South Africa</b>	-	25	29.8	32.8

Source: Waylen (2007), p. 94.

What have other studies found as main deterrents to women's winning parliamentary elections? In the Arab world the literature lists a multitude of factors explaining deterrents to women's political participation in general. On the top of the list is the dominant patriarchal society where women identify themselves only through relating to their father or husband. Additionally other deterrents include their illiteracy rates, the restrictions on their physical movement, the family obligations, their lack of self confidence plus the general sometimes lack of democratic political environment and usually male dominated political arena (Sabbagh, 2007, p.7).

The situation on the international arena is not totally different when discussing deterrents to women participation. A study on the continued underrepresentation of women in U.S. politics lists among the main hindrances: how women are less confident compared to men about their qualifications for office, how they are less competitive and more risk averse, and how being responsible for the majority of household chores and childcare they are more burdened than men (Lawless & Fox, 2012; Watson, Jencik & Selzer, 2005).

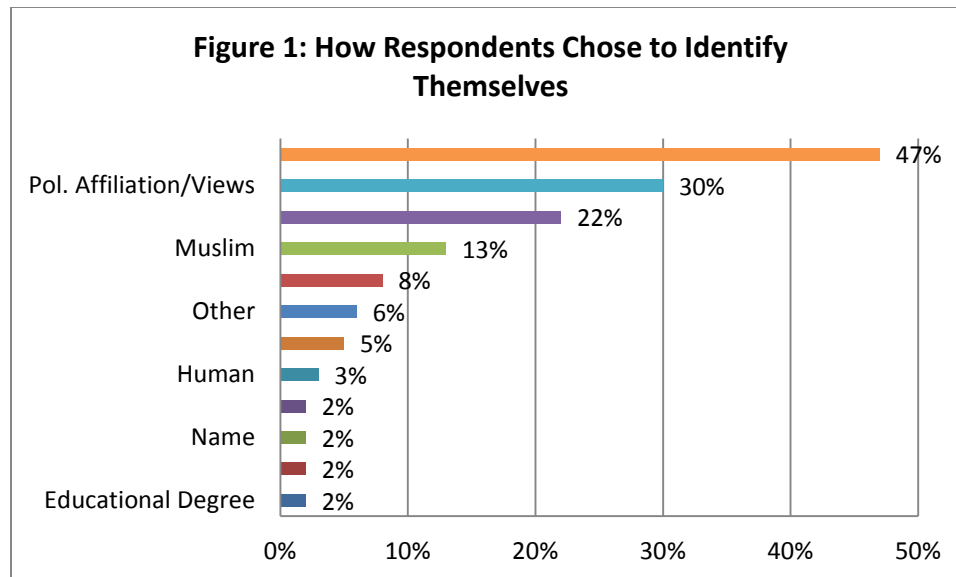
### **Results of Empirical Study**

In order to hear from women and understand more about what they think and whether they have sufficient confidence in their abilities to run for elections and to win seats in parliament, we conducted a set of face to face and online interviews with a purposive proportional sample of Egyptian women to explore the issues at hand. The total collected responses were from 244 women. The sample meets the standard of 200 set by Hair and his colleagues for empirical research (1998). Data collection took a total of three months February to April 2013. The survey was distributed after receiving the American University in Cairo (AUC) Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the board responsible for approving research at the university.

#### ***How Respondents Described Themselves:***

When respondents were asked how would they like to be identified, and how would they like to describe themselves, in ways other than the usual descriptive questions earlier, many different responses were received from the 129 respondents who answered the question. Through content analysis, the four most dominant descriptors used were: 'Egyptian' mentioned by 47% of the respondents, then their 'political affiliations or views' mentioned by 30% of the respondents, then their being 'women' mentioned by 22% of the respondents, and 'Muslim' mentioned by 13% of the respondents. The less frequently used descriptors were those linked to professions, motherhood, marriage status, and educational degree. Perhaps this dominant emphasis on the

Egyptian identity and on political views as identifiers is a reflection of the ongoing political situation in Egypt, two years into the transition period following the 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution. Egyptians have become exceedingly politicized and political discussions and debates are the everyday talk of all households.



***Respondents' participation in elections before vs. after the January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution:***

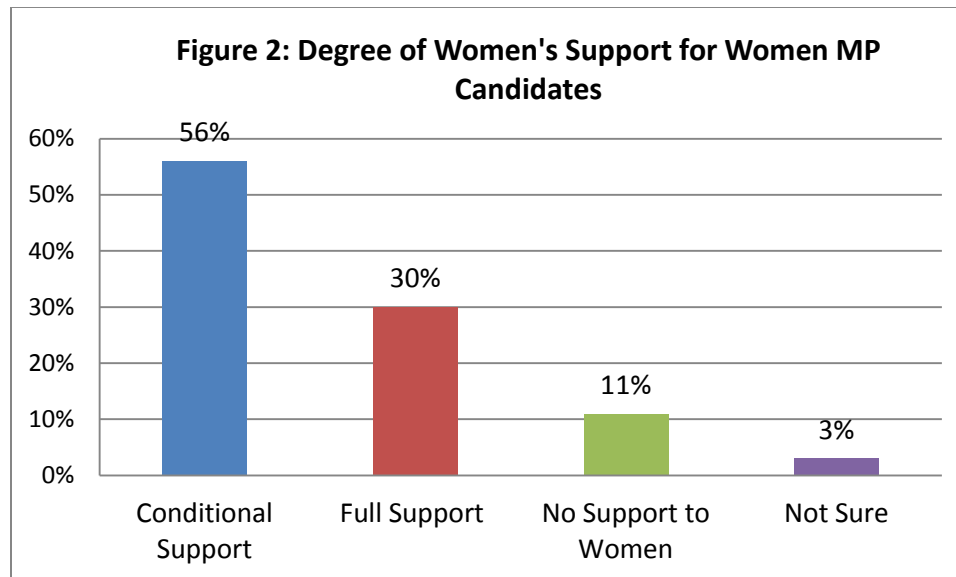
Before the Revolution only 19% of women respondents had participated in elections as voters, while after the 25 January Revolution, 79% had participated. This marks a huge change in political participation behavior for Egyptians in general. Before the Revolution people had no trust in the government and in the electoral system. They perceived the elections process to be a farce and mostly rigged to serve the interests of the ruling party. After the Revolution, the scene changed altogether. People started to have high hopes and expectations and became keen on getting their voices heard believing that now it mattered and that it would make a difference.

***Voting for women candidates:***

When asked if there were women candidates in their districts in the 2011 parliamentary elections 51% said yes, and 49% said no. While it was compulsory to include at least one woman on party lists, it is surprising that these women were not recognized or remembered by more than half the women voters (59.26%). They may have focused only on the individual candidates. Out of those who said yes, 26.25% voted for women, mainly to increase women participation in parliament and 13.75% felt that the woman candidate was the best choice. However, 42.5% said that they did not vote for a woman candidate since they felt she was not qualified, and 10% claimed there were no women candidates to vote for.

Out of those who said 'no', 73% of them said they would have voted for a woman had there been one. When analyzing further the open ended comments (120 comments) made by the respondents to that question, to check out the degree of support for other women candidates, 30% of the comments showed full unconditional support for women candidates, while 56% showed conditional support, 11% showed no support whatsoever, while 3% were not sure.

Some of the interesting comments expressing full support included statements like: “women are more capable of meeting other women’s needs”; and “women’s voices must be heard and become more effective”. On the other hand, some of the comments expressing opposition to women’s participation, included statements like: “because I believe men are more experienced than women”; and “men are better because they have been politically active for a longer time”. There was also the group of comments which expressed conditional support for women and mentioned things like: “If she is strong, capable and has a strong program/plan not just because she is a woman”; and “I will never select a woman from the Political Islamic group”.



For those who responded ‘yes’ to there being women candidates in their district, only 41% said that they actually did vote for the women. This means that women do not automatically vote for women. When asked if they would vote for women in the forthcoming October 2013 parliamentary elections, 83% said yes. This figure is in contrast with the actual percentage of women who said they had actually voted for women in the past elections, 41%. There is a difference between actual behavior and stated future plans.

#### ***Cognizance of names of women MPs in Egypt before vs. after the revolution:***

Forty-four percent of the respondents actually stated that they knew some names for women MPs from before the revolution. The most significant name that popped up was Dr. Georgette Kalliney, the Christian, liberal woman MP mentioned by 39% of the 77 respondents who wrote down the names they recalled. Following in line was Dr. Amal Othman, previous minister of social affairs and long time MP, mentioned by 25% of the respondents. And third in line, mentioned by 17% of the respondents, was Dr. Shahinaz El Naggar.

Each of the three women mentioned had a story behind her that partly explained why people remembered her name. Dr. Georgette was always a fierce vocal fighter appearing frequently on T.V. and fighting for Copts rights in Egypt. Dr. Amal Othman in addition to having been a minister of social affairs for more than twenty years, was a member in parliament for over twenty years as well, heading the legislative committee at one time and acting as Vice

Chair at other times, and there were accusations made by the opposition that the elections were rigged several times in her district to enable her winning against the Muslim Brothers candidates. As for Dr. Shahinaz El Naggar, she was a young beautiful MP who attracted a lot of media attention, especially when she first became the third wife for the businessman and National Democratic Party leader Ahmed Ez and then later resigned midterm from parliament as a result.

Forty-one percent of the respondents stated they recalled names for women MPs after the revolution, which is quite a similar percentage to those who said they remembered names from before the revolution. The most significant name that popped up was Dr. Azza El Garf or as she is popularly known Om Ayman, the Freedom and Justice party member who raised several heated debates regarding women's rights. Dr. Azza El Garf, or Om Ayman as most respondents stated, received the highest mention by 69.62% of respondents. The second most common mention was Marian Malak 16.46% followed by Margaret Azer with 13.92% of respondents. Marian Malak was appointed to parliament, while Margaret Azer was interestingly the first Coptic woman to actually be elected to parliament. Margaret Azer is a member of the Wafd party.

### ***Evaluation of perceived effectiveness of women MPs performance before vs. after the January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution:***

Seventy two percent felt that in general women MP performance before the revolution was ineffective, which is oddly enough close to their perception after the revolution, 74%. A revolution took place but nothing changed about the perception of women towards women MPs. When women were asked to elaborate further on their mostly negative evaluations concerning their assessment of women's performance in parliament before the Revolution, these were some of the responses received: 'parliament was just an ornament'; 'women are incapable of being MPs'; 'all the parliament was ineffective'; 'corruption was rampant'; 'we did not see any results'; most of them were members of the ruling party or were appointed'; 'they were a minority in a male dominant society'; 'there was no freedom at all'; or simply 'because men are better' and 'men perform better than women'.

The few positive assessments of women's performance in parliament before the Revolution included comments such as: 'women had a voice compared to the situation we are in currently'; 'they deserve to have rights'; 'women rights were more respected and considered then'; 'some of them had a voice and influence'; 'I saw that they presented interrogations and participated in parliamentary committees'; and 'women succeeded to pass different laws related to women'.

On analyzing the perceptions of women MP performance post the revolution, some respondents mentioned that the women MPs were incompetent and lacked the necessary skills and knowledge. Some mentioned "lack of past experience", "one track minded", and "not qualified". Other respondents felt that women MPs post the revolution, were overtaken by majority men parliament and majority Islamists: "Ikhwan messed it up for all", Ikhwan and Salafist did not care about women's rights" and "they were a minority". While some mentioned that they did not have an opportunity since the parliament did not complete its term.

Out of those who felt women MP voice was effective some were on the positive side mentioning "revolution and team spirit" and "now their voice is heard and is effective". While interestingly, some of those who viewed that women MP voice was effective, they described it as "effective against women's agenda".

### ***Opinion reference quota system:***

Women had different opinions regarding the quota system: 55% said they agreed to implementing a quota system, where a number of seats are reserved for women, while 45% disagreed. On reviewing the more detailed explanations given by 152 of the respondents to explain their choices, there was a stark difference in opinions. Those who said 'No' to the quota system mentioned reasons such as: 'men perform better'; 'we should leave the choice to the voters without placing specifications'; 'women are not qualified for election wars'; 'competency should be the reason, not positive discrimination'; 'Egyptians need those who can solve their problems and there is no need to be gender biased'; and 'a quota system is degrading to women'; 'women are not disabled'.

As for those who were in support of implementing the quota system, some of the reasons they mentioned were as follows: 'it is very much needed to ensure women's participation'; 'we have to support women because they want to wipe them out'; 'women are half the community'; 'because when the quota was abolished, women did not make it to parliament'; 'we need positive discrimination for a while'; 'to give women a chance in this patriarchal society' and 'to support women or else men take everything'.

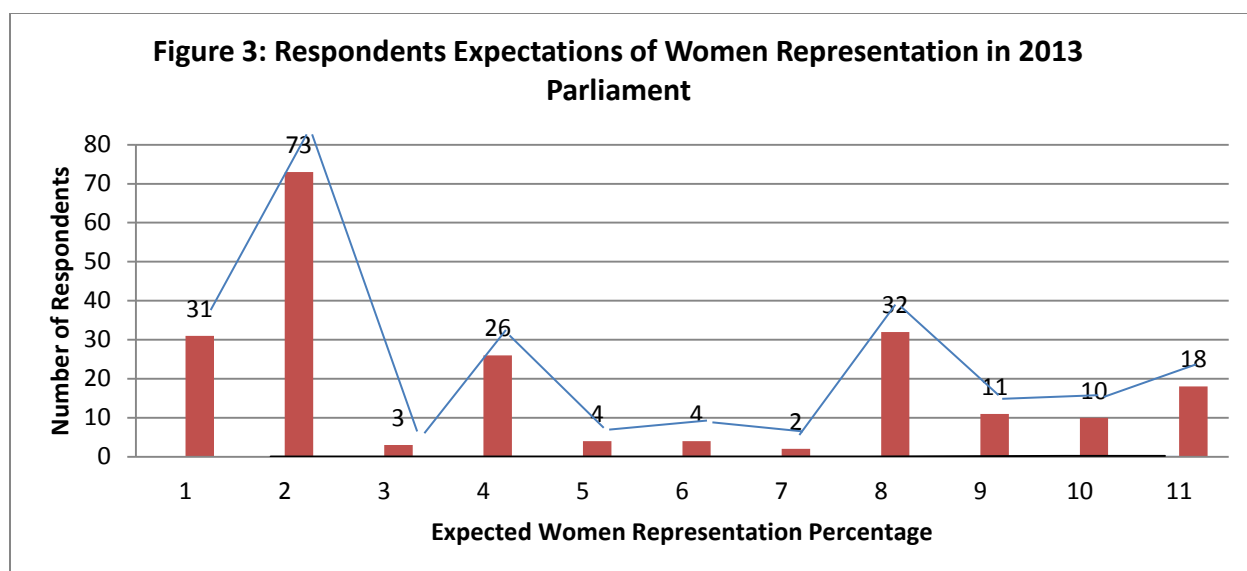
### ***Perception of women MPs as compared to men MPs:***

When asked about women MP performance as compared to men 15% perceived them to perform better than men, 62% perceived them to perform with the same level of competency, while 22% perceived them as performing worse than men.

As for the ability of women MPs to represent other women's needs, 67% perceived them to be better than men, 22% same as men, and 12% worse.

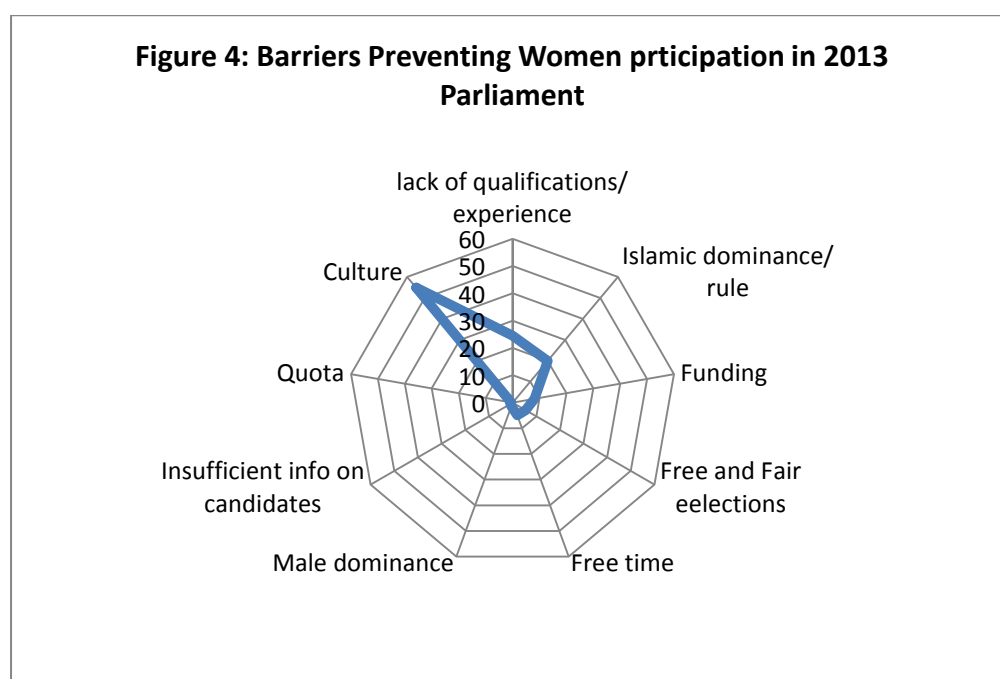
### ***Expected percentage of women MPs in 2013 parliament:***

Knowing that in the 2012 parliament, we had only 2% representation for women, we asked women about their expectations for the percentage of women representation in the forthcoming 2013 parliament. The biggest group of the respondents 45% of the 220 respondents was somewhat pessimistic with the belief that either women will attain the same percentage representation as before of 2%, or will attain a lower percentage. About 16% believed that women would attain between 3-5% representation. Approximately 4% believed women would achieve between 6-8% representation. Twenty three percent of the respondents believed women would achieve between 10-15% representation. Only 5% of the respondents were somewhat optimistic and thought women representation can exceed 25%. The remaining 7% of respondents either stated that they did not know or were unable to guess. Figure 3 below shows the different expectations by the respondents for the percentage of women in the 2013 parliament with a visible bulge in the expectation of 2% representation or below.



***Most important barriers preventing women from winning seats in 2013 parliament:***

When asked to list the most significant barriers preventing women from winning seats in the next 2013 parliament, the most significant barriers included: culture, 54.09%; lack of qualifications or experience, 24.55%; followed by Islamist dominance or rule, 20%; funding, 8.18%; corrupt/ unfair elections, 5.49%; and free time, 5%.

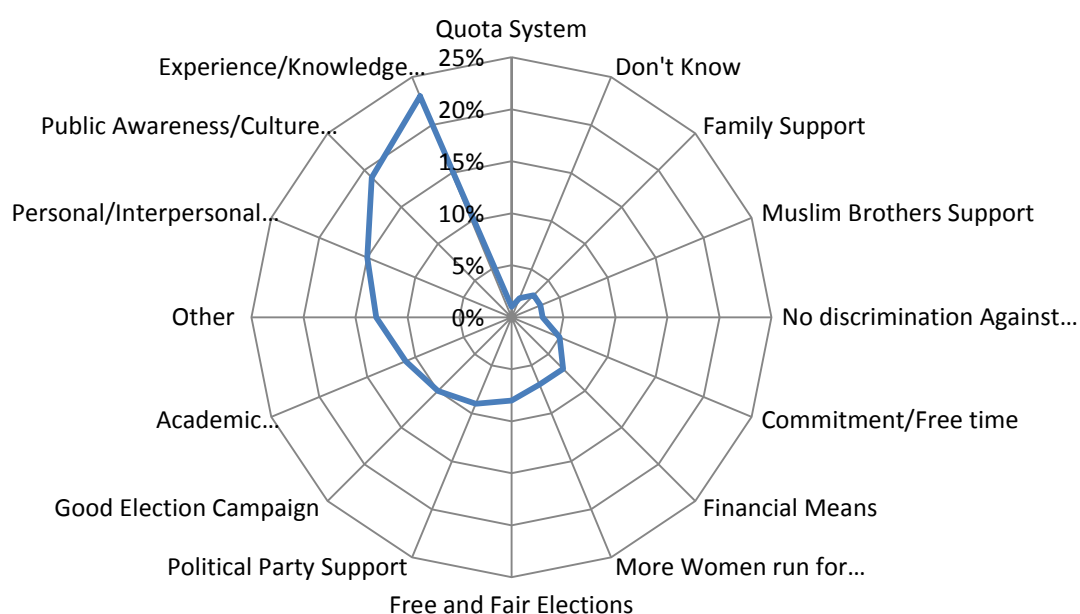


***Most important success factors for women to win seats in 2013 parliament:***

When women were asked about the three most important success factors for women to win seats in the forthcoming 2013 elections, out of the 202 respondents to the question, the most

important cited factors were: ‘experience and knowledge of political sphere’ mentioned by 23% of respondents, ‘public awareness and culture change’ mentioned by 19% of respondents; ‘personal and interpersonal skills’ mentioned by 15% of respondents. Other factors in order of frequency of mention included: academic qualifications, good election campaign, political party support, free and fair elections, more women running for parliament, financial means, commitment, and absence of discrimination against women. The least frequently mentioned factors included Muslim brothers support, family support and the implementation of a quota system. There were also some odd comments categorized under ‘others’, which included: ‘she has to be veiled’ and ‘bribing people to vote for her’ or ‘the departure of the Muslim Brotherhood’, or ‘a miracle’.

**Figure 5: Three most important Success Factors for Women to Win Seats in 2013 Parliament**

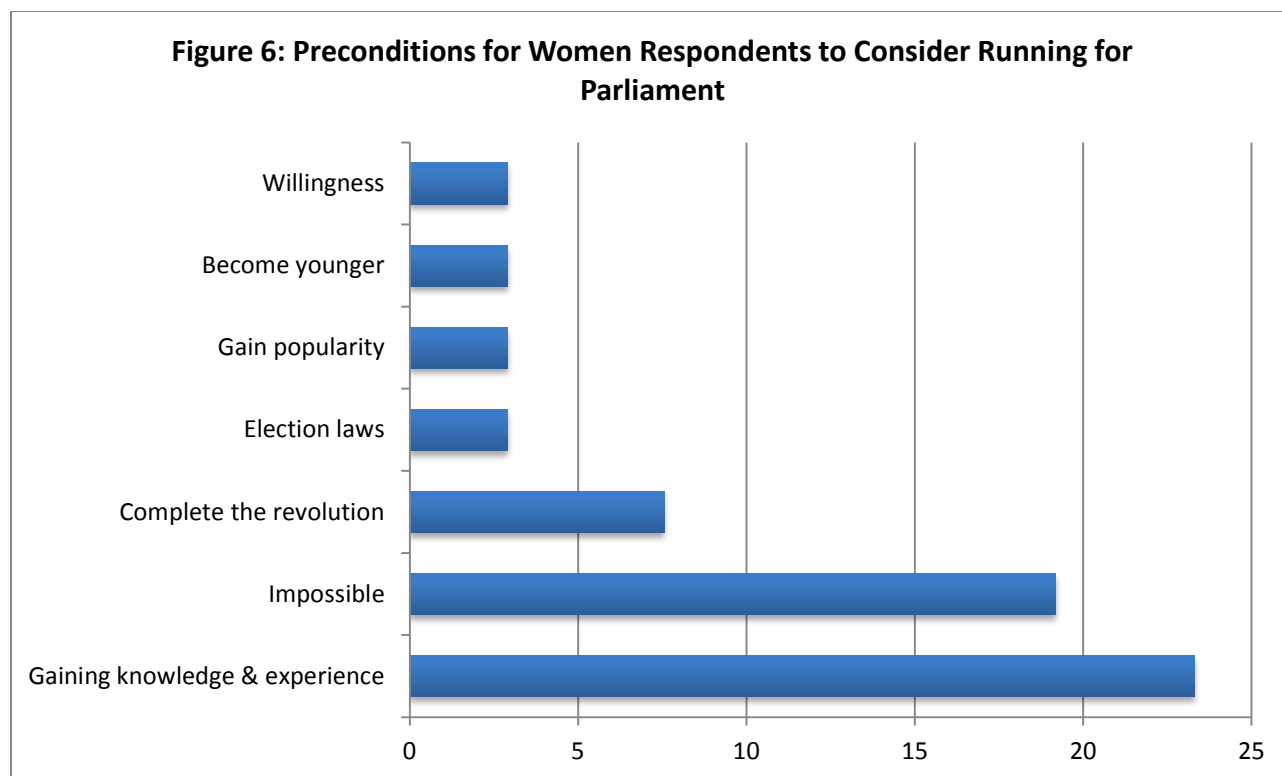


### ***Women's self confidence:***

Only 27% of respondents thought they had the needed qualifications and skills to become members in parliament. Only 1% had actually run for parliament before (3 respondents). 27% stated they would consider running for parliament in the future, which is equal to those who feel they are qualified. This indicates a general lack of confidence.

The most common factor that respondents listed as necessary for them to consider running for parliament in the future was that they raise their competency level through gaining knowledge and experience, 23.3%. On the other hand 19.19% of respondents felt that it was impossible for them ever to consider running for parliament. These varied from those who are simply not interested, to those who see they are not qualified for the position. Other mentioned criteria included references to the completion of the revolution as a pre-condition, 7.56%; election law, 2.91%; gain popularity, 2.91%, willingness, 2.91%; and becoming younger, 2.91%.





## Conclusion

Ever since the 25 January Revolution of 2011, women's rights in Egypt have been under attack. When focusing on their representation in the first house of parliament, it was found that their rights to a quota system were abolished and their percentage representation in the 2012 parliament became limited to a mere 2% compared to a 12% before the Revolution causing Egypt's rank in the 2013 Women in National Parliaments Report to drop to 136<sup>th</sup> over 190 countries. Egypt is amongst the lowest ranking countries as regards to women representation in national parliaments when compared to Arab countries that have implemented one type or another of a quota system to help with women's representation and help them overcome barriers faced.

A summary of the main findings of the empirical study conducted reveals the following:

- Egyptian women respondents tend to emphasize their national identity in describing themselves indicating a rising pride and concern with the public sphere.
- Egyptian women have become much more politically active after the Revolution as indicated by their percentage of participation in elections.
- Egyptian women do not automatically vote for other women in parliament. When there were reported women candidates in the election districts, only approximately a quarter of the women – 26%- voted for other women. Approximately three quarters – 73%- of those who said there were no women in their districts, stated that they would have voted for women had there been candidates, but this is in contrast with the figure for those who actually voted for women – 41% .

- Women mostly remembered names of other women MPs who had caused a stir of some kind, whether positive or negative, and whether related to politics or not.
- Majority of women perceived women MPs performance to have been ineffective both before and after the Revolution.
- There was disagreement regarding the need for a quota system; 55% yes versus 45% no.
- Compared to men, only 15% of women perceived women MPs to perform better, 62% perceived that they perform with the same level of competency.
- Regarding the ability of women MPs to represent other women's needs, 67% perceived them to be better able than men to do that.
- Concerning expectations for future percentage representation for women in the forthcoming 2013 parliament, the largest group of respondents – 45% - were somewhat pessimistic and expected that women will either get the same 2% representation as in the 2012 parliament or even less.
- The three most important perceived barriers preventing women from winning seats in parliament were the dominant societal culture, the lack of women qualifications and the current Islamists dominant rule.
- The three most significant perceived prerequisites for women success in parliamentary elections were women gaining knowledge and experience about the political sphere, a change in the prevalent societal culture coupled with an increase in people's awareness about the important role of women in society, followed by women acquiring the needed personal and interpersonal skills that would help win votes.

Going back to our original main research question, do women think they stand a chance in the second Egyptian parliament? It seems not to a large extent. Although women are now more politically active than before the Revolution, more claim support for other women candidates, and in their potential ability to perform in parliament if not better than men than on an equal footing, and in women's ability to represent other women's needs, but this is definitely in contrast with what is demonstrated by their actual voting behavior. Views about women MPs performance before and after the revolution are largely negative. Although the quota system is a proven tool for increasing women representation in other countries, it has the support of approximately only half the women respondents. Views are largely pessimistic about possible increases in the percentage of the women in the forthcoming parliament. The discussion of the barriers and the prerequisites to success emphasize issues outside women's control such as: societal culture, awareness of the importance of women's role in society, and the Islamists dominant rule; plus it emphasizes in more ways than one the need for women to build their capacities, gain knowledge and experience before venturing into politics. In general, as is the case with other women worldwide, Egyptian women need to build more confidence in their abilities to perform in parliament. The road ahead is a challenging one, requiring perseverance in continuing to work for women's rights.

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*Study Annex*

**Table No. 1: ANNEX : Sample Demographics: Comparison between Study Sample and Egypt Population Demographics:**

<b>Demographic Feature</b>	<b>Study Sample</b>	<b>Egypt Population</b>	<b>Source for Egypt Demographics</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>15.57% are 18&lt;25</b>	<b>20% between the age of 15-25</b>	Population reference bureau <a href="http://www.prb.org/Articles/2011/youth-egypt-revolt.aspx">http://www.prb.org/Articles/2011/youth-egypt-revolt.aspx</a>	Proportional to a great extent
	<b>44.67% are 25&lt;35</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
	<b>22.54% are 35&lt;50</b>			
	<b>11.48% are 50&lt;60</b>			
	<b>5.74% above 60</b>	<b>4.5% 65 years or above</b>	index Mundi (2011 Estimations) <a href="http://www.indexmundi.com/egypt/demographics_profile.html">http://www.indexmundi.com/egypt/demographics_profile.html</a>	Proportional to a great extent
<b>Perceived Income Level</b>	<b>17.21% Lower Income</b>	<b>20% below poverty line</b>	Central Intelligence Agency World Fact Book <a href="https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html">https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html</a>	Proportional to a great extent noting that the determination of the level of income of surveyed respondents depended largely on their own perceptions.
	<b>65.98% Middle Income</b>	<b>“According to renowned economist Galal Amin, educated, middle-class citizens constitute between 40 percent and 50 percent of Egypt’s population”</b>	Egypt Independent (20 Jan., 2011). <a href="http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/egypts-middle-class-wont-follow-tunisian-example-experts-say">http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/egypts-middle-class-wont-follow-tunisian-example-experts-say</a>	Somewhat proportional.
	<b>16.80% Higher Income</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>

<b>Education</b>	<b>5.33% cannot read and write</b>	<b>Egypt Illiteracy 28.6%</b>	US Department of State Diplomacy in Action <a href="http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5309.htm">http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5309.htm</a>	Percentage of illiteracy representation in sample less than actual
	<b>11.07% can read &amp; write</b>			
	<b>15.57% High School Diploma</b>			
	<b>46.31% Bachelor's Degree</b>			
	<b>15.98% Master's Degree</b>			
	<b>5.74% Ph.D.</b>			
<b>Perceived Political Affiliation</b>	<b>Socialists: 11.16% Liberals: 45.04% Islamists: 22.73% Others: 21.07%</b>	<b>N/A</b>		No statistical data available reference political affiliation of voters' population.
<b>Membersh ip in political parties</b>	<b>92.62 not members 7.38% members in political parties</b>	<b>97.8 – 99.5% of women not members in political parties</b>	Baseera The Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research, 2012	Proportional to a great extent
<b>Women employement</b>	<b>36.48% unemployed 63.52% employed</b>	<b>24.1% unemployment rate for women in second quarter of 2012.</b>	Al-Ahram Gate (14, Aug. 2012), <a href="http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/0/50405/Business/0/Egypt-unemployment-rate-hits-record-high-in-secon.aspx">http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/0/50405/Business/0/Egypt-unemployment-rate-hits-record-high-in-secon.aspx</a>	Somewhat proportional
<b>Social Status</b>	<b>56.2 Married 37.6% Single 6.2% Widowed/ divorced</b>			

**Table No. 2 - Annex : Elected Women Candidates in the 2012 Parliamentary Elections**

<b>Name of Candidate</b>	<b>Political Party</b>	<b>Elected/A ppointed</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Election District</b>	<b>Brief Synopsis</b>
<b>1.Margaret Azer</b>	Al Wafd	Elected – Party List	Worker	Cairo-Second-Madinet Nasr	First Coptic woman to join parliament through elections. Has a dual undergraduate degree in Commerce and in law.
<b>2.Sanaa El Said</b>	Al-Masry Al-Democrati Al-Igtemai	Elected – Party List	Worker	Assyout – Second District	Works at the Agricultural Credit Bank in Assyout.
<b>3.Hanan</b>	Al-Wafd	Elected –	Worker	Damietta	Works as an engineer in Kafr

<b>Abou El Gheit</b>		Party List			Saad in Damietta.
<b>4. Azza El Garf</b>	Freedom & Justice	Elected – Party List	Farmer	Giza-Second-Boulaq	Has an undergraduate degree in Social Service, worked as a journalist and as religious preacher.
<b>5. Magda El Noweishi</b>	Al- Wafd	Elected – Party List	Worker	Ismailiya	Has an undergraduate degree in Development and Social Planning from Ein Shams University. Worked as a journalist and initially was a member in the National Democratic Party (NDP) during Mubarak's rule.
<b>6. Hoda Ghania</b>	Freedom & Justice	Elected- Party List	Categories	Al- Qalyubia – Second	Has a degree in medicine and works as a dermatologist in a public hospital.
<b>7. Fadia Salem</b>	Freedom & Justice	Elected – Party List	Categories	South Sinai	Works as a lawyer and is the second Bedouin to join parliament ever.
<b>8. Reda Abdallah</b>	Freedom & Justice	Elected – Party List	Categories	Al-Sharkia-First-Zakazik	Has an engineering degree and works at the Ministry of Irrigation.
<b>9. Suzy Adly</b>		Appointed			Associate Professor of Economics, Faculty of Law, Alexandria University.
<b>10. Marian Malak</b>		Appointed			Graduated from the Law school, English section and works in the Orthodox Coptic Cultural Center.
<b>11. Siham Abdel Latif El Gamal</b>	Freedom & Justice	Elected – Party List	Farmer	Al- Dakahleya-First	Has a degree in education, English language and master's degree in Islamic Pedagogy.

Source: Al Sawy (2012), pp.31-35.